The Performance of Historically Underachieving Groups of Students in South Carolina: Small Steps Forward

South Carolina Education Oversight Committee
Division of Accountability

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The achievement gap between demographic groups of students has been described extensively (Jencks and Phillips, 1998). The focus in many of these studies is on historically underachieving groups of students (members of racial minority groups and students in poverty). Several states have identified achievement gaps between White and African-American students and between students in poverty and students above the poverty line and have taken steps to reduce those gaps. Reducing achievement gaps between student groups by raising the scores of lower scoring members of those groups is recognized as a necessary component of efforts to raise overall educational levels.

The State of North Carolina has a state program requiring schools to implement their own plans to close achievement gaps, provided increased funding directed toward reducing gaps, and created a Closing the Achievement Gap Section at the State Department of Public Instruction to provide technical assistance to schools and districts regarding gap reduction (NC Department of Public Instruction, 2003). On a similar note, the South Carolina African-American Student Achievement Committee issued a report in 2001 with recommendations for increasing the achievement of African-American students (SC Department of Education, 2001).

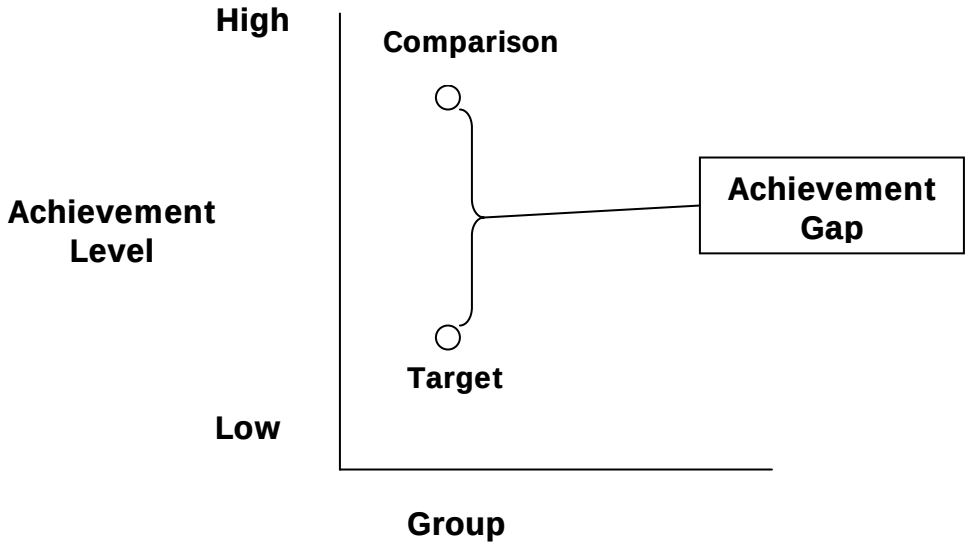
The achievement gap is an area of particular interest, and the Education Oversight Committee has requested that staff conduct in-depth studies of SC's educational system. We reviewed the data to provide a description of the achievement gap in elementary and middle schools, and identified a set of schools that are closing the gaps in specific subjects for specific student groups.

What is the achievement gap?

The achievement gap is often described in terms of differential performance by different student demographic groups on state or national achievement tests. For example, a finding from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the performance of White students exceeds that of African-American students, and the performance of students living above the poverty line exceeds that of students living in poverty (Grissmer, Flanagan, and Williamson, 1998; Hedges and Nowell, 1998). An important education reform goal is to close the achievement gap between the demographic groups by raising the performance of all groups, with the expectation that the lower scoring groups must improve more rapidly than the higher scoring groups to "catch up."

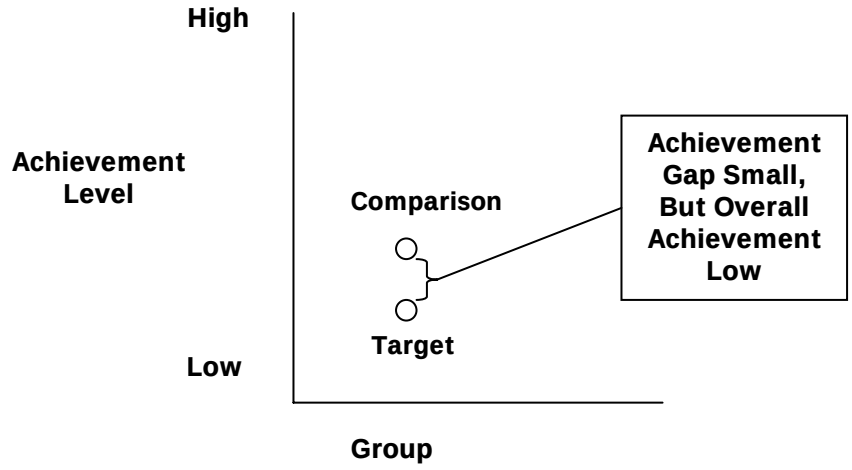
The gap is described in terms of the target group (the lower-scoring demographic group) and the comparison group (the higher-scoring group) (see Figure 1). The difference in achievement between the target and comparison groups at various performance levels (Basic, Proficient, Advanced) is the achievement gap.

Figure 1



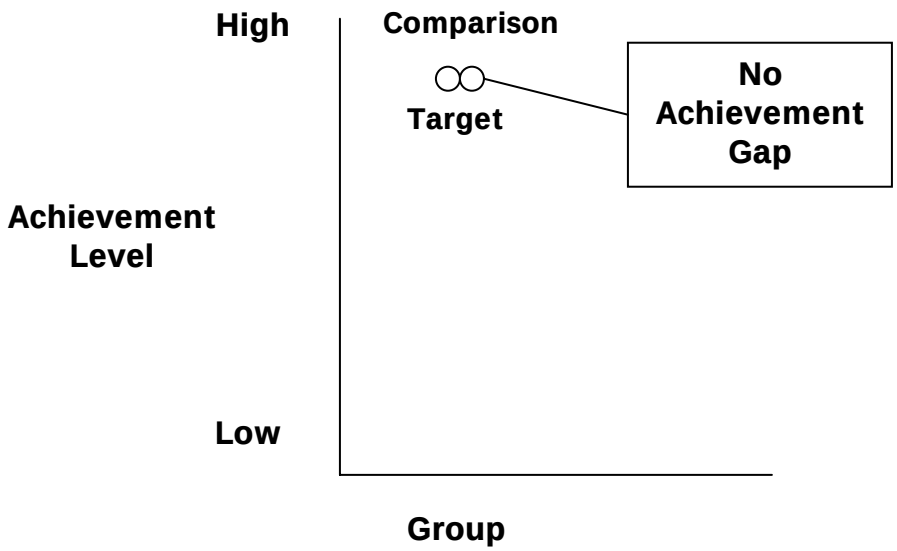
Reducing the gap can be accomplished in a couple of ways. All the groups can be poorly performing, resulting in small gaps (see Figure 2). This is not a desirable outcome.

Figure 2



The achievement of both target and comparison groups can be raised to a high level (Figure 3). This is the desirable outcome, and the approach we are pursuing in SC.

Figure 3



The study

We studied the 2001-2002 performance on PACT English language arts (ELA) and mathematics in grades three through eight of African-American and White students, and of students participating in the federal free/reduced price lunch program and students who pay for lunch. The target groups were African-American students and students participating in the free/reduced lunch program. The comparison groups were White students and students not participating in the lunch program (pay lunch).

Table 1 provides some additional insight into these demographic groups.

Table 1
South Carolina Demographic Statistics
Measures of Child Well-Being
2000 Census Data

Measure	African-American	Non-Hispanic White
Children ages 6 – 17 Years	259,282	399,219
% children in poverty, 1999	33.7%	9.2%
Number of children ages 6-17 years in poverty	87,378	36,728
Median family income, 1999	$28,742	$50,794
% children in neighborhoods where more than 32.2% of families are female-headed, no spouse	50.5%	13.3%
% children in neighborhoods with more than 18.6% persons in poverty	47.5%	13.0%
% children in neighborhoods where more than 14.7% of persons 16-19 are high school dropouts	36.0%	30.4%
% children in neighborhoods where more than 38.1% of working age men are unemployed	22.8%	4.7%
% children with all four characteristics	9.9%	1.1%
% children (Pre-K – 12) in public school	95.9%	82.0%
% children (Pre-K – 12) in private school	4.1%	18.0%

Source: Kids Count, 2003

African-American children are more likely to be living in poverty than White students. Even though there are more White children than African-American, there are more than twice as many African-American school-aged children in poverty as White children. The depth and breadth of poverty for South Carolina's children, especially among African-American children, is a major factor to consider when attempting to understand the source of achievement differences among different demographic groups of children.

The achievement levels studied were the percentages of students in each group scoring Basic or higher (Basic, Proficient, or Advanced) and percentages of students scoring Proficient or higher (Proficient or Advanced) on the PACT ELA and math tests administered in spring 2002.

In addition to studying the performances of the target and comparison groups described above, we also studied the PACT performance of each of the combinations of student demographic groups (African-American free/reduced lunch, African-American pay lunch, White free/reduced lunch, and White pay lunch). The study of the combinations helps to understand the effects of poverty when evaluating the performance of demographic groups. For example, is the higher performance of White students in part because fewer White students live in poverty than African-American students? By studying the performance of poor- and non-poor White and African-American students, we can help to control for effects related to socioeconomic status.

We also studied an additional factor, the overall achievement level of the school attended. School overall achievement level was defined as school Absolute Rating (Excellent, Good, Average, Below Average, and Unsatisfactory). This study was done to identify the relationships among school overall achievement and the achievement gap.

Finally, we identified a group of schools that were closing the achievement gap for at least one of the target groups in at least one subject area. In the future we hope to further study these schools and other schools like them to identify common educational practices that can be encouraged and implemented in other schools.

Results from the study

Data for the study came from two primary sources: 2002 PACT test results for demographic groups published on the SC Department of Education (SDE) Web site (www.myscschools.com); and the original 2002 PACT test data files to obtain data on the combinations of demographic groups (White pay lunch, African-American free/reduced lunch, etc.). The 2002 PACT results reported on the SDE web site are from students who were attending the same school on both the 45th day and on the first day of testing; these data also include data from students with disabilities tested at a lower grade level than their nominal grade based on age (off-level testing). The data on the 45th day and on off-level testing were not available for the combinations of demographic groups studied from the PACT test data files.

Achievement Gaps in 2002

The data analysis is presented first at the statewide level for four demographic groups: African-American students; White students; students participating in the federal free/reduced price lunch program (subsidized meals); and students not participating in the federal lunch program (full-pay meals). The data for these four groups are then analyzed at the school level, where school-level data are analyzed by their 2002 Absolute Rating status (Excellent, Good, Average, Below Average, and Unsatisfactory). The same analyses are then reported based on the combinations of the demographic groups (African-American free lunch; African-American pay lunch; White free lunch; White pay lunch). These last analyses permit the estimation of the effects of poverty within the racial groups; further insights are provided when the data are analyzed by school rating, providing a control for school overall achievement. The analyses are

presented for English language arts (ELA) percent Basic or above; ELA percent Proficient or Advanced; Math Basic or above; and Math Proficient or Advanced.

The Statewide results for the 2002 ELA PACT tests are listed in Table 2 and Figures 4-7, and the achievement gaps are listed in Table 3.

Table 2
2002 PACT Results By Demographic Group

Demographic Group	ELA		Math	
	% Basic or above	% Proficient or Advanced	% Basic or above	% Proficient or Advanced
All Students	74.8	31.2	68.2	28.6
White	84.8	42.9	80.4	40.2
African-American	61.2	15.3	51.7	12.7
Free/Reduced Lunch	63.3	16.7	55.3	15.2
Pay Lunch	86.9	46.4	81.8	42.8

Table 3
2002 PACT Achievement Gaps Between Demographic Groups

Target – Comparison Group	ELA		Math	
	% Basic or above	% Proficient or Advanced	% Basic or above	% Proficient or Advanced
African-American – White	-23.6	-27.6	-28.7	-27.5
Free/Reduced Lunch – Pay Lunch	-23.6	-29.7	-26.5	-27.6

The data in Table 2 indicate that pay lunch students have the highest scores and African-American students have the lowest. The percentages of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in both subjects are considerably lower than the percentages scoring Basic or above for all groups.

The achievement gaps between the groups listed in Table 3 were calculated by subtracting the performance of the comparison groups (White and pay lunch) from that of the target groups (African-American and free/reduced lunch). Since the comparison groups score higher than the target groups, the differences are negative. For example, the percentage of African-American students scoring Basic or above in ELA is 23.6 percentage points lower than White students. The gaps in 2002 ranged from -23.6% (ELA % Basic or above and % Proficient or Advanced for African-American vs. White students) to -29.7% (ELA % Proficient or Advanced, free/reduced vs. pay lunch students).

The achievement levels for the demographic groups by school Absolute Rating are shown in Figures 8-11, and the achievement gaps between the groups by school rating are exhibited in Figures 12-15. Several observations are evident from Figures 8 through 11:

- The overall achievement levels for each group are highest in Excellent schools and lowest in Unsatisfactory schools;
- For ELA % Basic or above (Figure 8), the percentages of African-American and free/reduced lunch students scoring Basic or above in Unsatisfactory schools are approximately half of the percentages of White and pay lunch students in Excellent schools;
- For ELA % Proficient or Advanced (Figure 9), the percentages of African-American and free/reduced lunch students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Unsatisfactory schools are approximately one-eighth the percentages of White and pay lunch students in Excellent schools;
- For Math % Basic or above (Figure 10), the percentages of African-American and free/reduced lunch students scoring Basic or above in Unsatisfactory schools are slightly more than one-third the percentages of White and pay lunch students in Excellent schools;
- For Math % Proficient or Advanced (Figure 11), the percentages of African-American students and of free/reduced lunch students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Unsatisfactory schools are approximately one-tenth the percentages of White and pay lunch students in Excellent schools.

Figures 12 through 15 reveal the following:

- The pattern of gaps across schools having different ratings differs between scores of % Basic or above and % Proficient or Advanced;
- The sizes of the gaps between African-American and White students, and between free/reduced and pay lunch students are similar;
- For ELA and Math % Basic or above, the sizes of the gaps for all groups are similar for all school rating levels;
- For ELA and Math % Proficient or Advanced the magnitude of the gaps for all groups increases from Unsatisfactory to Excellent schools, with Excellent schools having the largest gaps and Unsatisfactory schools having the smallest;
- The sizes of the gaps in % Proficient or Advanced for lower-rated schools may be affected by the very low proportions of students from all groups in these schools scoring at higher performance levels; the very low performance limits the size of the differences between groups.

As indicated earlier, one of the goals for these analyses was to shed some light on the association of race and socioeconomic status with PACT performance in 2002. We know from the data that the average performance of African-American students is lower than that of White students, and that the performance of free/reduced lunch students is lower than that of pay lunch students. The data in Table 1 indicate that African-American students are more likely to be living in poverty than White students. Without further analysis, we cannot tell from the data the extent to which the lower performance of African-American students is due to poverty.

To gain some insight into this question, we reanalyzed the data by subdividing the racial groups into two categories: those participating in the free/reduced lunch program and those who paid for their lunches. This enabled us to control or compensate for the effects of poverty on the performance of different racial groups.

However, it is important to keep in mind that the use of the federal subsidized lunch data allows only partial control for the effects of poverty because of the differential levels of poverty in the African-American and White communities. The US Census data reported by Kids Count indicate that poverty in South Carolina is deeper and more pervasive among African-American families than White families. These data reveal that the median income of African-American families in 2000 was $28,742, while the median for White non-Hispanic families was $50,794. The upper income limit of eligibility for the federal reduced lunch program for a child from a family of four is $33,485; for the free lunch program it is $23,530 for a family of four (SC Department of Education, 2003). The median family income for African-American families is at a level to qualify for the reduced lunch program, while the median family income for non-Hispanic White families is well above the cut-off for the program. When reviewing the findings from this analysis, it is important to keep in mind that the use of the federal subsidized lunch eligibility data may not provide an adequate control for socioeconomic status. It is likely, for example, that the poverty of African-American children participating in the free/reduced price lunch program may be greater than that of White children participating in the program, and that the family wealth of African-American children not participating in the program may still be considerably lower than that of White pay lunch children. Thus the differences in performance between African-American and White children who have the same federal lunch program status may be related to differences in economic status between the racial groups which cannot be detected with the data available for this analysis.

The analysis for all students statewide is presented in Figures 16-23.

Figures 16-19 reveal that:

- For all tests and performance levels, White pay lunch students score the highest and African-American free/reduced lunch students score lowest;
- For ELA, African-American pay lunch students and White free/reduced lunch students score at similar levels; this trend is also seen to a lesser degree for Math;
- For both ELA and Math, the percentage of African-American free/reduced lunch students scoring Basic or above is approximately 60% of the percentage of White pay lunch students;
- For both ELA and Math, the percentage of African-American free/reduced lunch students scoring Proficient or Advanced is approximately one-fourth the percentage of White pay lunch students.

The gaps between poverty groups holding race constant and between racial groups holding poverty constant are shown in Figures 20-23:

- For both subjects and for both performance levels (% Basic or above and % Proficient or Advanced), the largest gaps are between African-American free/reduced lunch students and White pay lunch students, while the smallest

gaps are between African-American full pay students and White free/reduced lunch students;
- For ELA % Basic or above (Figure 20), the gaps between poverty groups within racial groups and between racial groups within poverty groups are similar in magnitude;
- For ELA % Proficient or Advanced (Figure 21), the gap between White students in poverty and White students not in poverty and the gap between African-American students and White students who pay for their lunches are similarly large;
- For Math % Basic or above (Figure 22), the gaps between racial groups with the same lunch status are larger than the gaps between students having the same race but different lunch status;
- For Math % Proficient or Advanced (Figure 23), the pattern is similar to that for ELA % Proficient or Advanced.

The analysis of the demographic subgroups was also conducted at the school level. The performance of each subgroup was summarized by school Absolute Rating. The results are shown in Figures 24-27.

- Across both ELA and Math and for each performance level (% Basic or above and % Proficient or Advanced), the performance for each subgroup was higher for each higher level of school rating;
- Across both ELA and Math and for each performance level and for all school rating levels, the achievement of White pay lunch students was the highest and the achievement of the African-American free/reduced lunch students was the lowest, while African-American pay lunch students and White free/reduced lunch students showed similar levels of achievement.

These data are also exhibited in Figures 28-31. The graphs in Figures 28-31 show the levels of achievement for each subgroup for each school rating level along with the achievement gaps between the subgroups. The 95% confidence intervals for the subgroup means are also indicated on these figures. The size of the confidence intervals is indicated with a box around each data point. Larger boxes signify larger confidence intervals. A 95% confidence interval specifies the range within which we are 95% sure the "true" mean lies. The size of the confidence interval depends in large part on the size of the sample from which the data are calculated. For example, in Unsatisfactory schools there were only 399 White pay lunch students for whom test data were available, while there were 6,262 African-American free/reduced lunch students with test data. The size of the confidence interval in Unsatisfactory schools for White pay lunch students is thus much larger than that for African-American free lunch students in the Unsatisfactory schools. This pattern is reversed in Excellent schools: 27,052 White pay lunch students and 4,041 African-American free lunch students were tested in those schools, resulting in a very small confidence interval for White pay lunch students and a somewhat larger, though still small, confidence interval for African-American free/reduced lunch students. Data points which have intersecting confidence interval boxes can be considered not significantly different.

Figures 28-31 show:

- For both ELA and Math and for both performance levels (% Basic or above and % Proficient or Advanced), the achievement levels of African-American pay lunch students and that of White free/reduced lunch students are similar for most school rating levels;
- For both ELA and Math % Basic or above (Figures 28 and 30), the magnitude of the gaps between the subgroups are similar across the school rating levels;
- For both ELA and Math % Proficient or Advanced (Figures 29 and 31), the achievement gaps are larger for schools with higher Absolute Ratings than for lower-rated schools, especially the gap between African-American free/reduced lunch students and White pay lunch students.

The analysis of the achievement of demographic subgroups generated several additional issues to be considered:

- The similar achievement levels of African-American pay lunch students and White free/reduced lunch students statewide and for all school Absolute Rating levels may in part reflect our study's inadequacies in the control of economic differences between the racial groups. It may be that the average income of the families of pay lunch African-American students is just above the cut-off for eligibility for the subsidized lunch program and the average family incomes of the White free/reduced lunch eligible students may be just below the cut-off. The two groups may thus be more similar in their socioeconomic status than the lunch program eligibility would indicate. Unfortunately, the available data did not permit an exploration of this hypothesis.
- The overall achievement of all the subgroups was quite low in Unsatisfactory and Below Average schools, especially for the % Proficient or Advanced achievement level. The smaller gaps in the % Proficient or Advanced category in these schools may simply reflect the low overall achievement levels, which would limit the size of the gap attainable.
- While the average performance of African-American students participating in the free/reduced lunch program is highest in schools rated Excellent, the achievement level for these students is at the same level as White free/reduced lunch students in Average schools. The low achievement at the % Proficient or Advanced levels by African-American free/reduced lunch students in schools receiving high Absolute Ratings is a matter of deep concern and should be a major focus of attention for personnel in those schools.

Trend Data

What changes in the achievement gap have taken place since the first year of PACT testing in 1999? PACT data for 1999 and 2001 are available for comparison. The 2002 PACT demographic data reported by the SDE cannot be compared to data for previous years because the 2002 data were calculated differently. Unlike in previous years, the data from students who were not present in the same school on both the 45th day and on the first day of testing in the spring were omitted from the 2002 results. The 2002 data included results from students with disabilities tested off-level (at a grade level lower than their nominal grade based on age), while data from previous years did not. The 1999 and 2001 data and trends are indicated in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4
1999 and 2001 PACT Results for Selected Demographic Groups

	ELA						Math					
	% Basic or above		Difference	% Proficient or Advanced		Difference	% Basic or above		Difference	% Proficient or Advanced		Difference
Group	2001	1999	2001-1999	2001	1999	2001-1999	2001	1999	2001-1999	2001	1999	2001-1999
All Students	73.3	63.8	9.5	31.9	25.3	6.6	64.4	53.3	11.1	26.1	16.5	9.6
White	84.0	76.5	7.5	43.7	35.8	7.9	76.9	68.3	8.6	36.9	23.2	13.7
African-American	58.6	46.7	11.9	15.7	11.0	4.7	47.2	32.8	14.4	11.4	5.2	6.2
Free/Reduced Lunch	60.7	48.5	12.2	17.0	11.8	5.2	50.4	36.2	14.2	13.2	5.9	7.3
Pay Lunch	85.2	78.4	6.8	46.1	37.9	8.2	77.7	69.3	8.4	38.6	26.4	12.2

Table 5
Differences in Achievement Gaps, 1999 – 2001 PACT

Target – Comparison Group	ELA Achievement Gaps					Math Achievement Gaps			
	% Basic or above		% Proficient or Advanced			% Basic or above		% Proficient or Advanced	
	1999	2001	1999	2001		1999	2001	1999	2001
African-American – White	-29.8	-25.4	-24.8	-28.0		-35.5	-29.7	-18.0	-25.5
Free/Reduced Lunch – Pay Lunch	-29.9	-24.5	-26.1	-29.1		-33.1	-27.3	-20.5	-25.4

Table 4 shows that the achievement levels of all the demographic groups improved between 1999 and 2001. However, the groups showed different rates of improvement for different performance levels. African-American students and free/reduced lunch students made larger increases than White and pay lunch students at the Basic or above performance level on both the ELA and math tests. Conversely, White and pay lunch students increased their performance at the Proficient or Advanced levels more than African-American and free/reduced lunch students.

These differences among the groups at different performance levels affected the sizes of the achievement gaps between groups over time (Table 5). At the Basic or above levels for both the ELA and math tests, the sizes of the gaps were reduced between 1999 and 2001 for African-American compared to White students and for free/reduced lunch eligible students compared to pay lunch students. However, the gaps in the percentages of students scoring Proficient or Advanced increased between the African-American and White students and between the free/reduced and pay lunch students.

Although the gaps remain large, the reduction of the gaps at the Basic or above performance levels is a real sign of progress. However, the federal requirement in No Child Left Behind and the South Carolina achievement goals in the SC Education Accountability Act both demand that students score at least at the Proficient level. The increases in the gaps at the Proficient or above level are thus a real cause for concern.

Identification of schools closing the gap

To provide further insight into the achievement gap in South Carolina, we identified schools that had high levels of performance by one or more of the target groups in ELA, math, or both. The performance of the target group of students had to be in the range of the performance of the comparison group (or higher). For example, a school in which the percentage of African-American students (target group) scoring Proficient or Advanced was in the range of or higher than the percentage of White students (comparison group) scoring at that level statewide would meet the criteria for selection. The following process was used to identify these schools.

The following prerequisite conditions had to be met for a school to be considered:

- The school must have test results from at least one of the target groups to be considered.
- The size of the target group in the school must be large enough to provide reliable information (at least 30 students).

To obtain the achievement cut points to identify schools making exemplary progress in closing the gap, schools were ranked by the PACT achievement performance of all students in the school for these tests and performance levels:

- ELA - % scoring Basic or higher;
- ELA - % scoring Proficient or Advanced;
- Math - % scoring Basic or higher;
- Math - % scoring Proficient or Advanced.

The achievement level for each test corresponding to the 75th percentile and the 90th percentile for all schools was identified. These data and the averages of the school percentages of students scoring at each achievement level for all students and for the demographic groups are shown in Table 6. These analyses were carried out with school as the level of analysis, so the percentages listed in Table 6 represent the percentile ranks of schools and the average of the school percentages for all schools.

Table 6
75th and 90th Percentiles and Averages of
School Percentages of Students in Each Category
2002 Pact Test Performance

PACT Test Performance Levels	All Students – 75th %ile and Above of All Schools	All Students – 90th %ile and Above of All Schools	Average School Perform-ance - All Students	Average School Performance - African-American Students	Average School Performance - White Students	Average School Performance Free/Reduced Lunch Students	Average School Performance - Pay Lunch Students
ELA % Basic or higher	84.3%	90.0%	74.7%	61.2%	84.8%	63.3%	86.9%
Math % Basic or higher	79.6%	87.0%	68.2%	51.6%	80.4%	55.4%	81.8%
ELA % Proficient or Advanced	39.5%	50.0%	31.2%	15.3%	42.9%	16.7%	46.4%
Math % Proficient or Advanced	38.7%	48.0%	28.6%	12.7%	40.2%	15.2%	42.8%

Source: SC Department of Education www.myscschools.com

The performance of each qualifying target group (having at least 30 tested students) in each school was evaluated against the performance corresponding to the 75th and 90th percentiles for all schools statewide. The criteria for identification were that the target group had to score at least at the level of the 75th percentile for all students in all schools (this level of performance was near that of the comparison groups). For example, a school in which 36 of the 42 African-American students (85.7%) tested scored Basic or higher on the ELA test would be identified as a school closing the gap because 85.7% of the target group (African-American students) scored Basic or higher, which is greater the 75th percentile for all students (84.3%).

The performance of each target group in schools meeting the 75th percentile criterion was also examined to see if it was at or above the 90th percentile for all students in all schools (exceeded the performance of the comparison group). In our example school, the 85.7% scoring Basic or higher was less than the criterion at the 90th percentile (90.0%).

Schools in which at least one target group met or exceeded the 75th or 90th percentile for each test were identified as schools showing strong evidence of closing the achievement gap.

Results:

Fifteen of 859 schools with data did not have sufficient students (at least 30) in any of the target groups, so could not be evaluated. The remaining 844 schools were eligible for consideration.

Eighty-seven schools (two of which had both elementary and middle school grades and thus two report cards) were identified. These schools represent approximately 10% of all schools having sufficient numbers of students in the target groups for analysis. Fifty-seven schools had at least one target group achieve between the 75th and 89th state percentiles, and thirty had at least one group achieve at the 90th percentile or higher. The schools are listed in Table 7.

Table 7
Schools With Target Demographic Groups Scoring At or Above the 75th or 90th Percentiles

District	School	Group(s) Identified**							
Aiken	Hammond Hill Elementary	A-A ELA 75th Basic+	F/R ELA 75th Basic+						
Aiken	Chukker Creek Elementary	F/R Math 75th Basic+							
Anderson 1	Cedar Grove Elementary*	F/R ELA 75th Prof+	F/R ELA 90th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Basic+					
Anderson 1	Concrete Elementary*	F/R Math 75th Basic+	F/R ELA 90th Basic+						
Anderson 1	West Pelzer Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Basic+	F/R ELA 75th Prof+	F/R Math 75th Prof+					
Anderson 1	Spearman Elementary	F/R Math 75th Basic+							
Anderson 1	Wren Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Basic+	F/R ELA 75th Prof+						
Anderson 1	Hunt Meadow Elementary*	F/R ELA 75th Prof+	F/R Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Prof+	F/R ELA 90th Basic+				
Anderson 2	Marshall Primary	F/R Math 75th Basic+							
Anderson 2	Honea Path Elementary*	A-A Math 75th Basic+	F/R ELA 75th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Basic+					

District	School	Group(s) Identified**							
Anderson 4	La France Elementary*	F/R ELA 90th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Basic+						
Anderson 4	Pendleton Elementary*	A-A Math 90th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Basic+						
Anderson 4	Townville Elementary*	F/R ELA 75th Prof+	F/R Math 75th Prof+	F/R ELA 90th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Basic+				
Bamberg 1	Richard Carroll Primary	A-A Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Basic+						
Beaufort	St Helena Elementary	A-A ELA 75th Basic+	A-A Math 75th Basic+	A-A Math 75th Prof+	F/R ELA 75th Basic+	F/R ELA 75th Prof+	F/R Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Prof+	
Berkeley	Sangaree Elementary	A-A ELA 75th Prof+							
Berkeley	Menriv Park Elementary*	F/R Math 75th Basic+	F/R ELA 90th Basic+	F/R ELA 90th Prof+					
Berkeley	Marrington Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Prof+	F/R Math 75th Basic+						
Charleston	James Island Middle	A-A ELA 75th Basic+							
Charleston	Orange Grove Elementary	A-A Math 75th Basic+							
Charleston	Stono Park Elementary	A-A ELA 75th Basic+	A-A Math 75th Basic+	A-A Math 75th Prof+	F/R ELA 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Prof+		
Charleston	Ashley River Elementary	A-A ELA 75th Basic+							

District	School	Group(s) Identified**							
Charleston	James B Edwards Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Basic+							
Charleston	Buist Academy*	A-A ELA 90th Basic+	A-A ELA 90th Prof+	A-A Math 90th Basic+	A-A Math 90th Prof+				
Charleston	Charleston School of the Arts*	A-A ELA 75th Prof+	A-A Math 75th Basic+	A-A ELA 90th Basic+	F/R ELA 90th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Basic+			
Charleston	Charles Pinckney El.	F/R ELA 75th Basic+							
Cherokee	Goucher Elementary	F/R Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Prof+						
Chesterfield	Edwards Elementary*	F/R Math 75th Prof+	A-A Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Basic+					
Clarendon 2	Manning Primary	A-A Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Basic+						
Darlington	Pate Elementary*	A-A ELA 75th Prof+	A-A Math 75th Basic+	F/R ELA 75th Prof+	F/R Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Prof+	A-A ELA 90th Basic+	F/R ELA 90th Basic+	
Dillon 2	East Elementary	A-A Math 75th Prof+	F/R Math 75th Prof+						
Dillon 2	Stewart Heights Elementary*	A-A Math 90th Prof+	F/R Math 90th Prof+						
Dorchester 2	Rollings Middle School*	A-A Math 75th Basic+	F/R ELA 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Basic+	A-A ELA 90th Basic+	A-A ELA 90th Prof+	F/R ELA 90th Prof+		
Dorchester 2	Oakbrook Elementary	F/R Math 75th Basic+							

District	School	Group(s) Identified**							
Edgefield	Merriwether Elementary*	A-A Math 75th Prof+	A-A ELA 90th Basic+	A-A Math 90th Basic+	F/R ELA 75th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Basic+			
Florence 1	Royall Elementary	F/R Math 75th Basic+							
Greenville	Brook Glenn Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Basic+	F/R ELA 75th Prof+	F/R Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Prof+				
Greenville	Bakers Chapel Elementary	A-A ELA 75th Basic+							
Greenville	Mountain View Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Basic+						
Greenville	Oakview Elementary	A-A ELA 75th Basic+							
Hampton 1	Brunson Elementary*	A-A ELA 90th Basic+	F/R ELA 90th Basic+						
Horry	Aynor High	F/R Math 75th Basic+							
Horry	Daisy Elementary	F/R Math 75th Basic+							
Horry	Homewood Elementary*	A-A Math 75th Prof+	F/R ELA 75th Prof+	F/R Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Prof+				
Horry	Kingston Elementary	F/R Math 75th Basic+							
Horry	Lakewood Elementary*	F/R ELA 75th Basic+	F/R ELA 75th Prof+	F/R Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Prof+				
Horry	St James Elementary	F/R Math 75th Basic+							

District	School	Group(s) Identified**							
Horry	Pee Dee Elementary	A-A Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Basic+						
Horry	Waccamaw Elementary	F/R Math 75th Basic+							
Horry	Forestbrook Elementary*	F/R ELA 90th Basic+	F/R ELA 90th Prof+	F/R Math 90th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Prof+				
Horry	Carolina Forest Elementary*	A-A Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Prof+	F/R Math 90th Basic+					
Horry	Seaside Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Prof+							
Kershaw	Baron-Dekalb Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Basic+							
Kershaw	Bethune Elementary	A-A Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Basic+						
Kershaw	Jackson School	A-A Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Basic+						
Kershaw	Lugoff Elementary*	A-A Math 75th Prof+	F/R ELA 75th Prof+	F/R Math 75th Prof+	F/R ELA 75th Basic+	A-A ELA 90th Basic+	A-A ELA 90th Prof+	A-A Math 90th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Basic+
Lexington 2	Saluda Elementary for Arts	F/R Math 75th Prof+							
Lexington 5	Dutch Fork Elementary*	A-A ELA 75th Basic+	A-A ELA 75th Prof+	A-A Math 75th Prof+	F/R ELA 75th Basic+	F/R ELA 75th Prof+	A-A Math 90th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Prof+
Lexington 5	Seven Oaks Elementary	A-A Math 75th Basic+							

District	School	Group(s) Identified**							
Lexington 5	River Springs Elementary	A-A ELA 75th Basic+	A-A ELA 75th Prof+	A-A Math 75th Basic+					
Oconee	Keowee Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Basic+							
Oconee	Northside Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Basic+							
Oconee	James M. Brown Elem.	F/R Math 75th Basic+							
Oconee	Ravenel Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Basic+						
Oconee	Westminster Elementary*	F/R Math 90th Basic+							
Oconee	Orchard Park Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Basic+							
Pickens	Ambler Elementary*	F/R ELA 90th Basic+							
Pickens	East End Elementary	F/R Math 75th Basic+							
Pickens	Holly Springs Elementary*	F/R ELA 75th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Basic+						
Pickens	Liberty Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Prof+							
Richland 1	H B Rhame Elementary	A-A ELA 75th Basic+							
Richland 2	North Springs Elementary	A-A ELA 75th Basic+	A-A ELA 75th Prof+	A-A Math 75th Basic+	F/R ELA 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Basic+			
Richland 2	Rice Creek Elementary	A-A ELA 75th Basic+							

District	School	Group(s) Identified**							
Richland 2	Bookman Road Ele.	A-A ELA 75th Basic+	A-A Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Basic+					
Spartanburg 1	Campobello-Gramling School	F/R ELA 75th Prof+	F/R Math 75th Basic+						
Spartanburg 1	Holly Spgs-Motlow Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Basic+							
Spartanburg 1	New Prospect Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Basic+						
Spartanburg 2	Boiling Springs Junior High*	A-A ELA 75th Basic+	F/R ELA 75th Prof+	F/R ELA 90th Basic+					
Spartanburg 2	Cooley Spgs-Fingerville Elemen	F/R Math 75th Prof+							
Spartanburg 3	Clifdale Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Basic+							
Spartanburg 6	Pauline Glenn Springs Elementary*	F/R ELA 75th Prof+	F/R ELA 90th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Basic+					
Sumter 2	Shaw Heights Elementary	F/R ELA 75th Basic+							
Williamsburg	W M Anderson Primary	A-A ELA 75th Prof+	A-A Math 75th Basic+	A-A Math 75th Prof+	F/R ELA 75th Prof+	F/R Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Prof+		
Williamsburg	M.B. Lee Sr. Primary*	A-A Math 75th Prof+	F/R Math 75th Prof+	A-A Math 90th Basic+	F/R Math 90th Basic+				
Williamsburg	St Mark Elementary*	F/R Math 75th Basic+	A-A Math 90th Basic+						

District	School	Group(s) Identified**							
York 2	Bethany Elementary*	F/R Math 75th Prof+	F/R ELA 90th Basic+	F/R ELA 90th Prof+	F/R Math 90th Basic+				
York 2	Crowders Creek Elementary	A-A Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Basic+	F/R Math 75th Prof+					

* School had at least one group score at or above the 90th percentile.

** Groups are:

A-A ELA 75th Basic+ = African-American students, ELA test, at or above 75th %ile, scored Basic or higher;
A-A ELA 90th Basic+ = African-American students, ELA test, at or above 90th %ile, scored Basic or higher;
A-A Math 75th Basic+ = African-American students, Math test, at or above 75th %ile, scored Basic or higher;
A-A Math 90th Basic+ = African-American students, Math test, at or above 90th %ile, scored Basic or higher;
A-A ELA 75th Prof+ = African-American students, ELA test, at or above 75th %ile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
A-A ELA 90th Prof+ = African-American students, ELA test, at or above 90th %ile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
A-A Math 75th Prof+ = African-American students, Math test, at or above 75th %ile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
A-A Math 90th Prof+ = African-American students, Math test, at or above 90th %ile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
F/R ELA 75th Basic+ = Free/reduced lunch students, ELA test, at or above 75th %ile, scored Basic or higher;
F/R ELA 90th Basic+ = Free/reduced lunch students, ELA test, at or above 90th %ile, scored Basic or higher;
F/R Math 75th Basic+ = Free/reduced lunch students, Math test, at or above 75th %ile, scored Basic or higher;
F/R Math 90th Basic+ = Free/reduced lunch students, Math test, at or above 90th %ile, scored Basic or higher;
F/R ELA 75th Prof+ = Free/reduced lunch students, ELA test, at or above 75th %ile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
F/R ELA 90th Prof+ = Free/reduced lunch students, ELA test, at or above 90th %ile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
F/R Math 75th Prof+ = Free/reduced lunch students, Math test, at or above 75th %ile, scored Proficient or Advanced;
F/R Math 90th Prof+ = Free/reduced lunch students, Math test, at or above 90th %ile, scored Proficient or Advanced.

Not surprisingly, since these schools were chosen because their target demographic groups were achieving near or above the levels of the comparison groups statewide, their overall achievement tended to be high. Of the 89 report card absolute ratings issued for these 87 schools (two schools received both elementary and middle school report cards), 51 were Excellent, 36 were Good, and 2 were Average. These schools also received recognition for achievement and for other qualities in the past two years:

- 58 had received Palmetto Gold Awards, 28 of them for two consecutive years;
- 13 had received Palmetto Silver Awards;
- 3 were National Blue Ribbon Award schools; and
- 30 had received Red Carpet awards.

In an attempt to identify characteristics of these schools which would help to differentiate them from other schools, we compared their report card profile data to those from all schools in the State and to those from schools rated Excellent or Good. These comparisons for selected report card data are listed in Table 8.

Table 8
Comparison of 2002 Selected Report Card Variables
Schools In Which Target Group Scores Are At or Above 75th Percentile for All Students
Compared to All Schools And to Schools Rated Excellent or Good

Report Card Variable	Above 75%ile Schools			Excellent or Good Schools			All Schools (Grades 3-8)		
	Mean	5%ile	95%ile	Mean	5%ile	95%ile	Mean	5%ile	95%ile
Poverty Index	52.8	17.7	90.9	49.0	18.3	79.2	64.2	26.2	95.5
% Students Below Basic	13.2	5.7	21.2	18.0	7.5	26.5	29.4	10.2	54.7
Dollars per Student	5545.17	4140.00	7000.00	5531.35	4172.00	7075.00	5664.51	4194.00	7681.00
Student Teacher Ratio	19.2	14.4	22.9	19.2	12.3	24.5	18.4	10.6	24.5
Student Attendance	96.5	95.2	97.7	96.3	94.1	97.5	96.1	93.5	98.0
Teacher Attendance	95.1	92.1	97.4	95.4	92.4	98.3	95.2	92.4	98.2
Student Retention	3.5	0.6	7.5	3.1	0.5	7.0	4.1	0.7	9.2
Days Prof. Development	11.0	6.9	17.1	10.6	6.5	16.7	10.5	5.8	16.4
Teachers Advanced Degrees	50.7	30.0	71.4	51.4	30.0	71.1	48.3	25.6	69.0
% Cont. Contract Teachers	85.6	71.2	97.4	86.1	71.2	97.3	81.6	58.6	96.4

Table 8 Continued

Report Card Variable	Above 75%ile Schools			Excellent or Good Schools			All Schools (Grades 3-8)		
	Mean	5%ile	95%ile	Mean	5%ile	95%ile	Mean	5%ile	95%ile
Teachers Out of Field	1.4	0	7.0	1.6	0	7.4	2.3	0	9.5
Teacher Retention	88.1	79.5	95.0	86.7	75.4	94.4	83.9	69.1	93.6
Average Teacher Salary	40057.28	36178.00	44433.00	40334.86	36333.00	44433.00	39347.35	34807.00	43707.00
% Spent on Teacher Salaries	65.1	54.9	72.3	65.7	57.5	74.5	64.9	55.5	74.1
Principal's Years At School	6.8	1.0	17.0	6.1	1.0	17.0	5.3	1.0	16.0
% Parents Conferencing	97.2	82.8	100	96.6	80.6	99.8	92.3	61.3	99.7
Gifted & Talented Students	19.9	5.2	40.4	21.6	6.8	41.5	14.7	1.4	35.8
Students with Disabilities	7.9	3.3	14.6	8.9	3.4	17.0	10.2	3.3	20.1
Teacher Satisfaction Learning Environment	96.2	84.4	100	94.2	79.2	100	86.5	53.6	100
Student Satisfaction Learning Environment	90.1	76.6	100	85.7	67.2	97.6	80.7	56.3	96.6

Report Card Variable	Above 75%ile Schools			Excellent or Good Schools			All Schools (Grades 3-8)		
	Mean	5%ile	95%ile	Mean	5%ile	95%ile	Mean	5%ile	95%ile
Parent Satisfaction Learning Environment	90.4	77.8	100	88.0	71.3	100	82.5	60.0	97.4
Teacher Satisfaction Phys. & Social Environment	95.2	81.8	100	94.0	80.0	100	87.4	55.6	100
Student Satisfaction Phys. & Social Environment	88.7	73.1	98.8	86.3	69.1	97.8	81.5	59.6	97.1
Parent Satisfaction Phys. & Social Environment	89.4	77.8	100	86.9	70.0	99.2	80.5	56.1	97.6
Teacher Satisfaction Home-School	88.5	55.2	100	87.5	56.5	100	69.5	23.8	100
Student Satisfaction Home-School	91.9	83.3	100	89.9	78.8	98.8	87.8	75.1	97.7
Parent Satisfaction Home-School	81.5	63.8	94.4	76.9	56.3	92.1	72.7	50.0	90.2
Enrollment	542.2	224.0	955.0	600.1	232.0	1043.0	545.6	213.0	955.0

The identified schools had a higher poverty rate than the Excellent or Good schools but lower than that for all schools. Their dollars spent per student was less than all schools, but slightly higher than Excellent or Good schools. However, most of the differences between the identified schools and other schools were small. One exceptional area was in the teacher, student, and parent survey results, where the identified schools tended to have consistently higher results than the comparison schools. Parents, teachers, and students in the gap-reducing schools tended to be much more satisfied with home-school relations than survey respondents from other South Carolina schools. This suggests that teachers, students, and parents perceive these schools to be welcoming and positive places with a strong focus on learning.

The performance of the identified target group(s) in these schools was at such a high level that the achievement gap for those students compared to comparison students statewide was virtually eliminated. What the adults in these schools and their communities do every day is making a positive difference for their students. It would be helpful to further study these schools to identify practices and policies they have in common that would be helpful to other schools.

Discussion

Unsatisfactory and Below Average schools demonstrate an undesirable gap reduction (exhibited in Figure 2): overall low achievement for all groups leads to small achievement gaps. The challenge for these schools is to raise the achievement levels of all groups. The large gaps between student demographic groups in the percentages of students scoring Proficient or Advanced in Excellent and Good schools presents a somewhat different challenge. The challenge for these schools is to raise the achievement of their lower income students and students of color while maintaining the high levels of achievement of their higher-scoring students.

The need to reduce the achievement gaps among demographic groups of students is clear if we are to meet our goal that all students achieve at high levels of performance. While the achievement gaps remain large, the trend data indicate that South Carolina educators have risen to the initial challenge to reduce the numbers of poor and African-American children who are scoring below grade level. However, in 2002 it appears that only about 10% of South Carolina elementary and middle schools are coming close to eliminating the gap, and then only for some groups in one subject area in many cases. The trend data indicating that the gaps have increased at the Proficient and Advanced levels should prompt us to focus our efforts at increasing the performance of all students to higher levels.

The data also indicate that what the adults in schools and in communities do makes a difference, and that schools can be successful in raising the achievement levels of all students to a high level regardless of the risk factors students bring to school with them. The challenge now is to raise our expectations for all groups of students.

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Figures 4-31

From the Document:

The Performance of Historically Underachieving Groups of Students in South Carolina: Small Steps Forward

SC Education Oversight Committee
June 19, 2003

Figure 4: 2002 PACT English/Language Arts - Percent Basic or Above

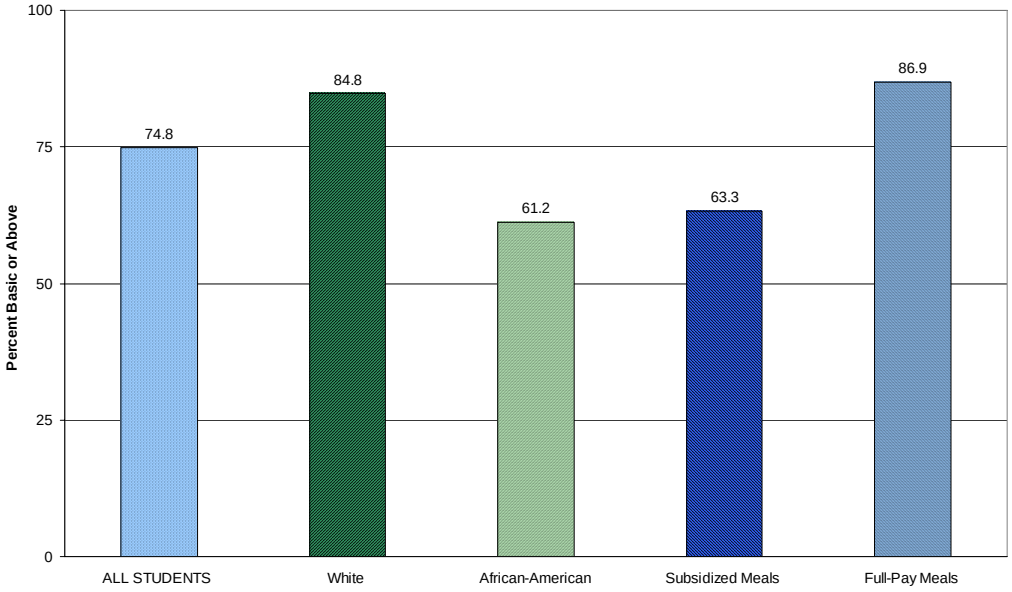


Figure 5: 2002 PACT English/Language Arts - Percent Proficient or Advanced

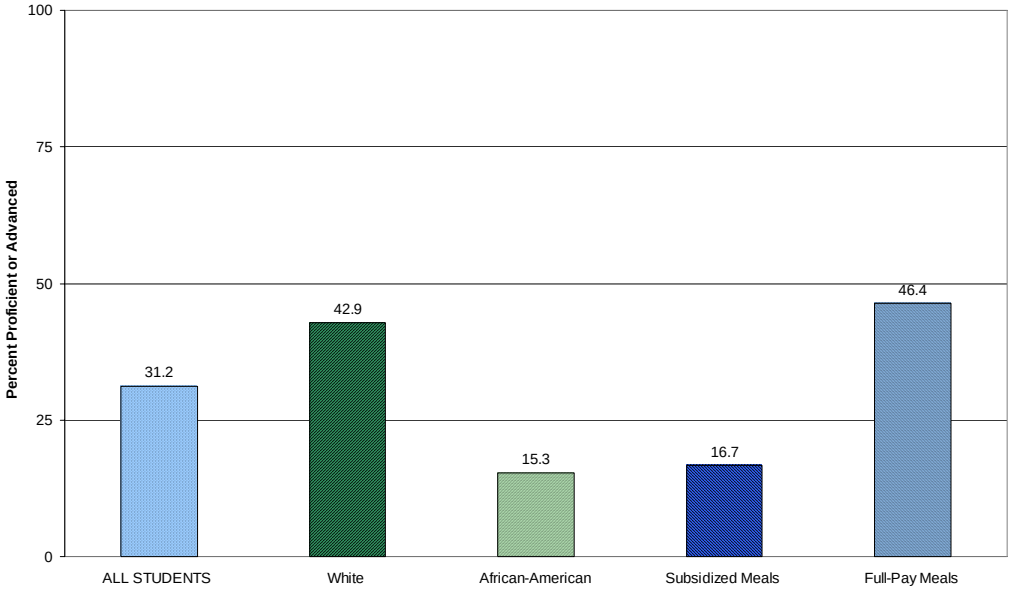


Figure 6: 2002 PACT Math - Percent Basic or Above

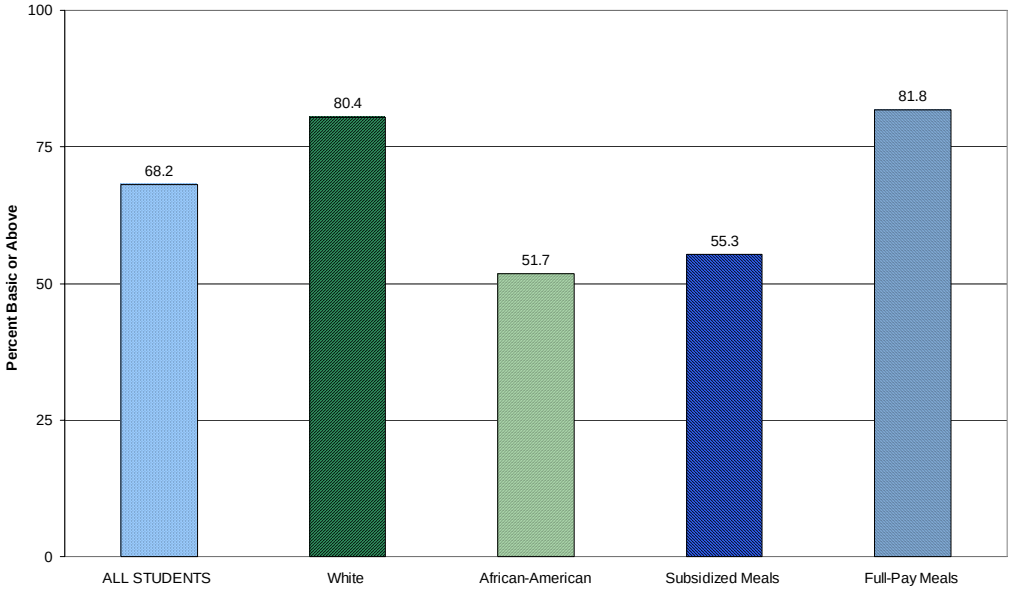


Figure 7: 2002 PACT Math - Percent Proficient or Advanced

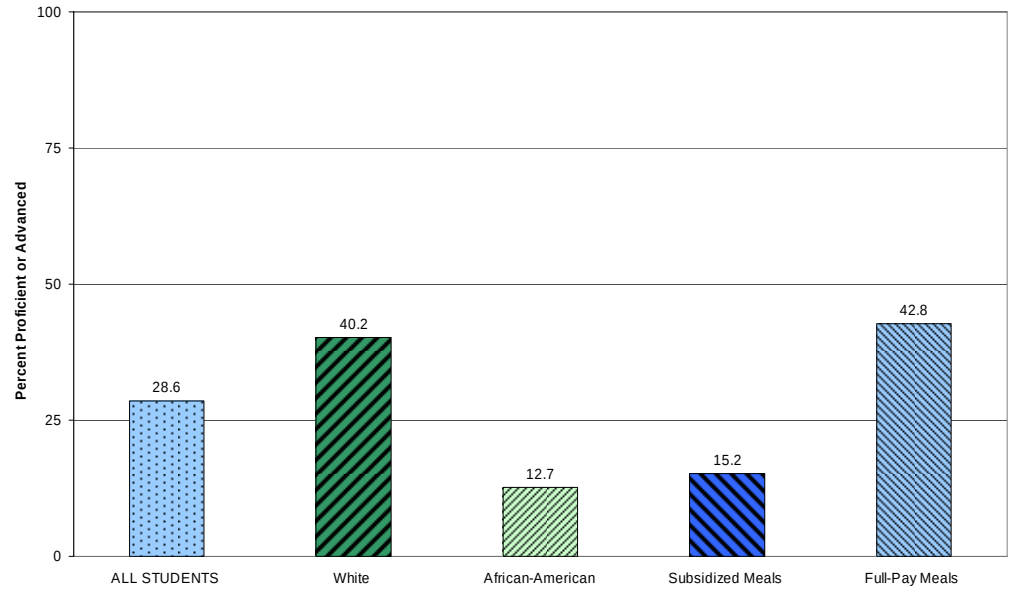


Figure 8: 2002 PACT English/Language Arts - Percent Basic or Above by Rating

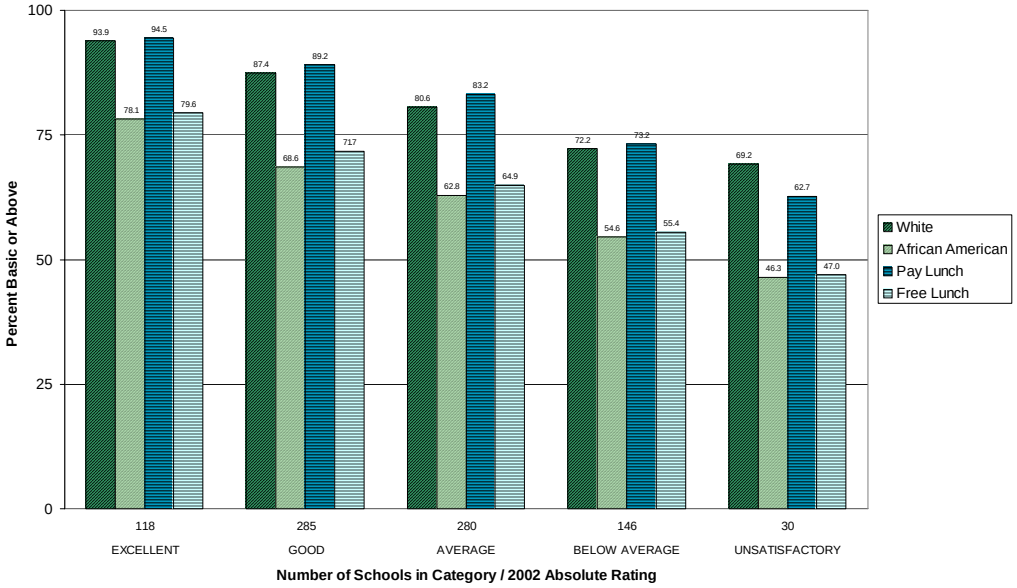


Figure 9: 2002 PACT English/Language Arts - Percent Proficient or Advanced by Rating

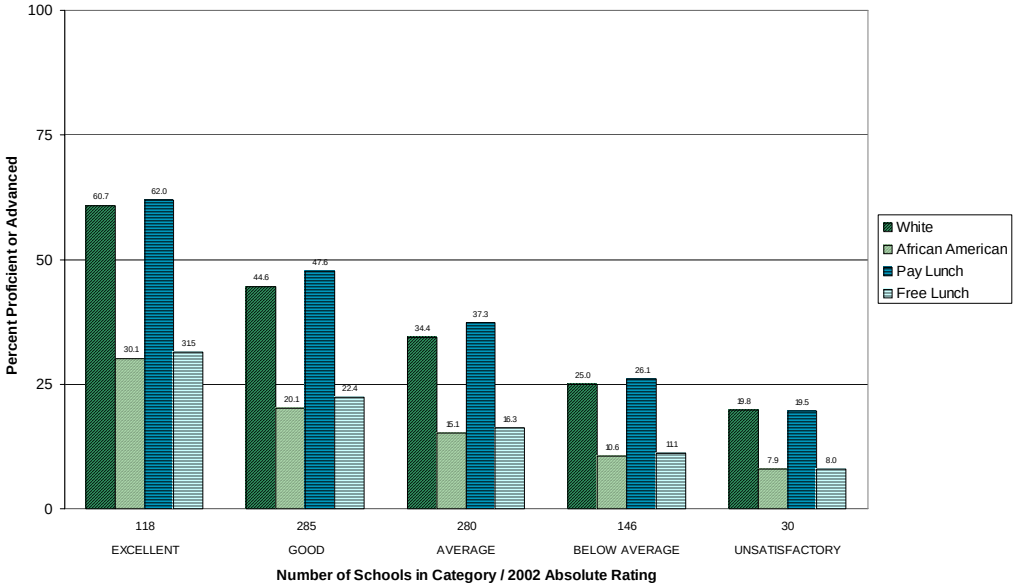


Figure 10: 2002 PACT Math - Percent Basic or Above by Rating

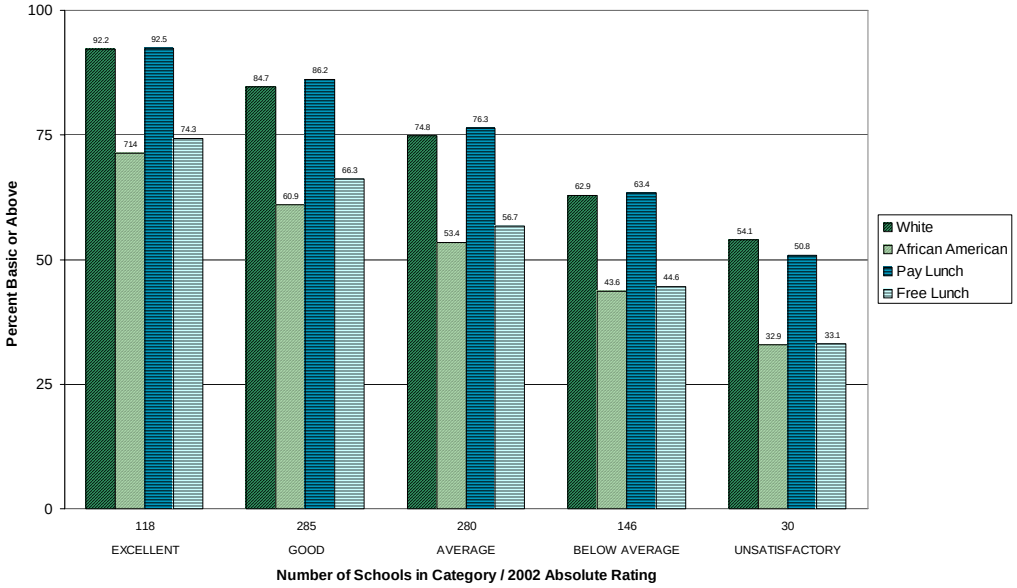


Figure 11: 2002 PACT Math - Percent Proficient or Advanced by Rating

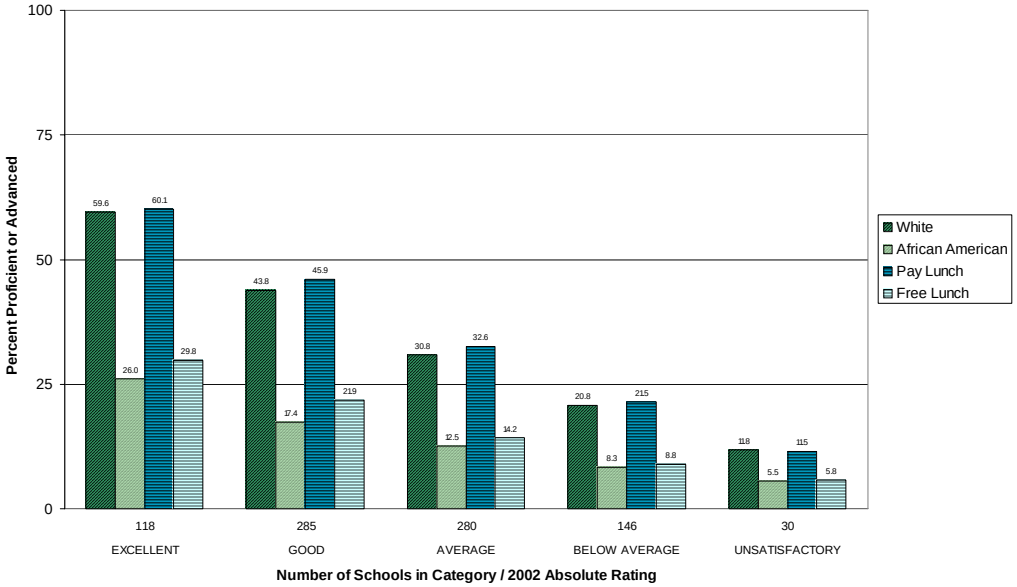


Figure 12: 2002 PACT English/Language Arts
Gap in Percent Basic or Above

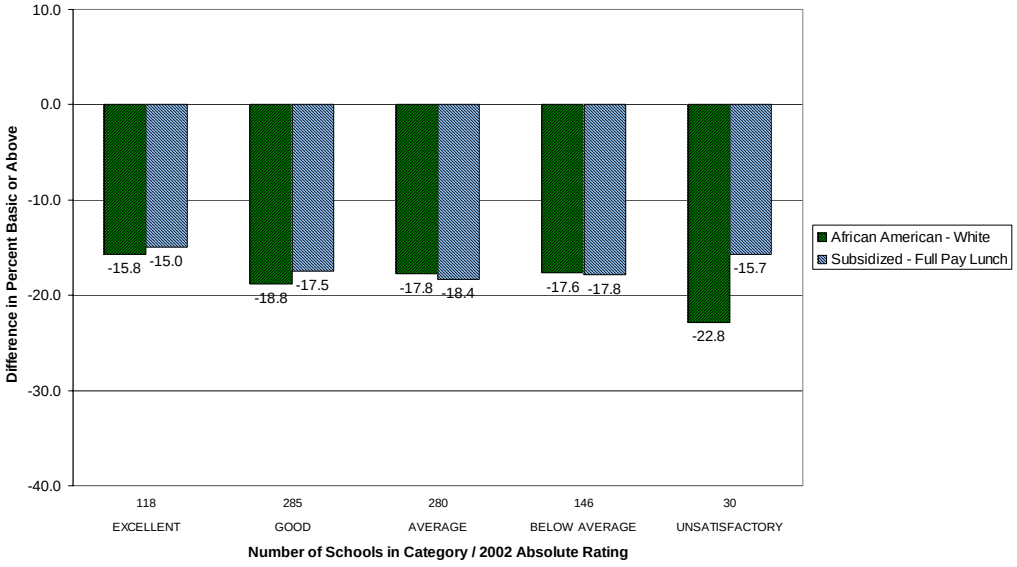


Figure 13: 2002 PACT English/Language Arts
Gap in Percent Proficient or Advanced

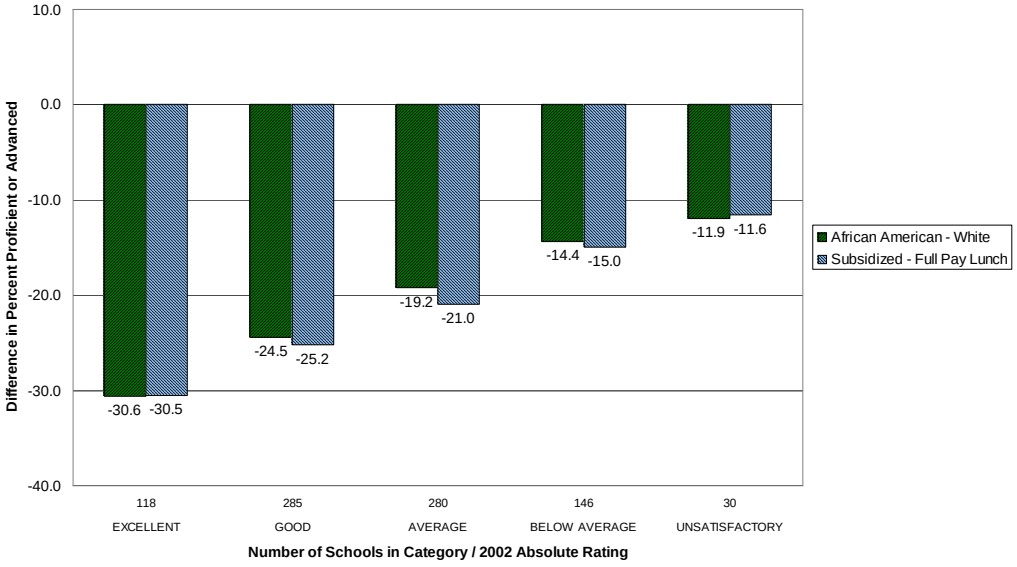


Figure 14: 2002 PACT - Math
Gap in Percent Basic or Above

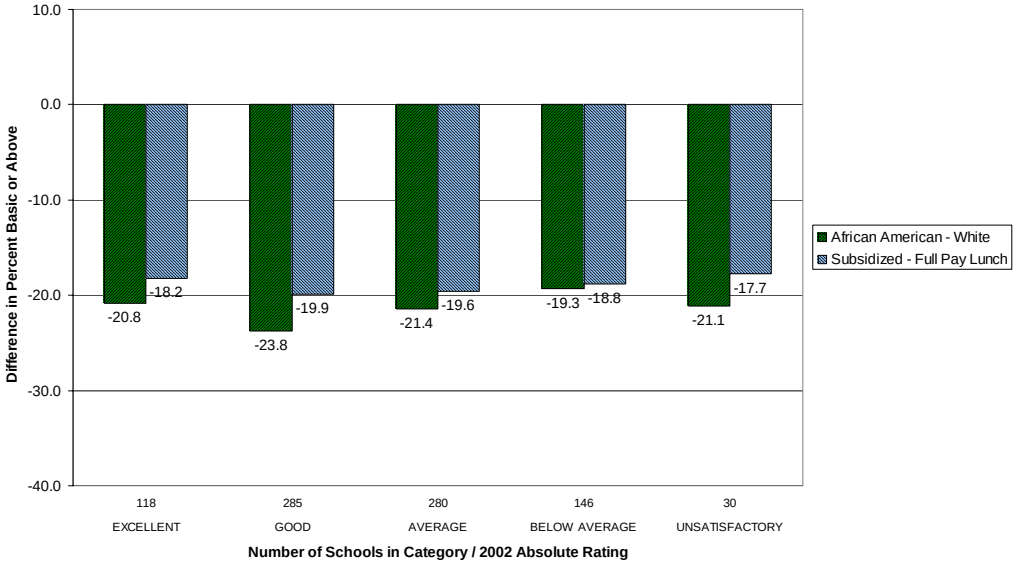


Figure 15: 2002 PACT Math
Gap in Percent Proficient or Advanced

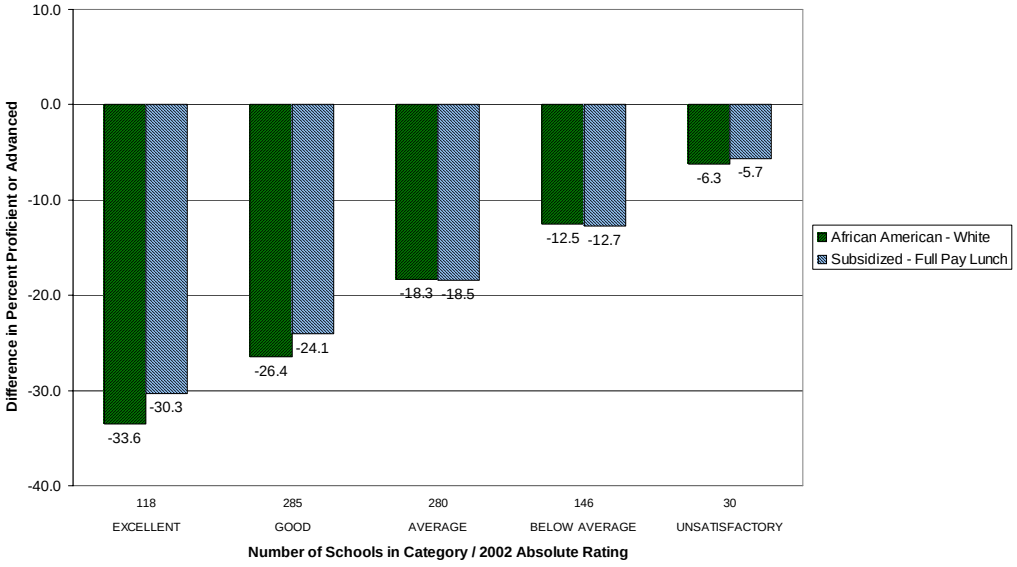


Figure 16: 2002 PACT English and Language Arts - Percent Basic or Above

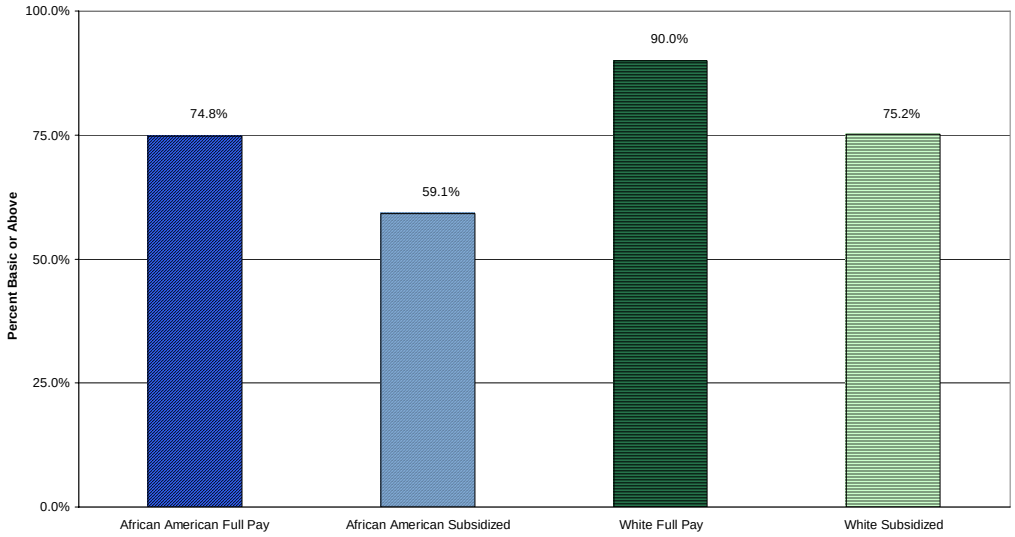


Figure 17: 2002 PACT English and Language Arts Percent Proficient or Advanced

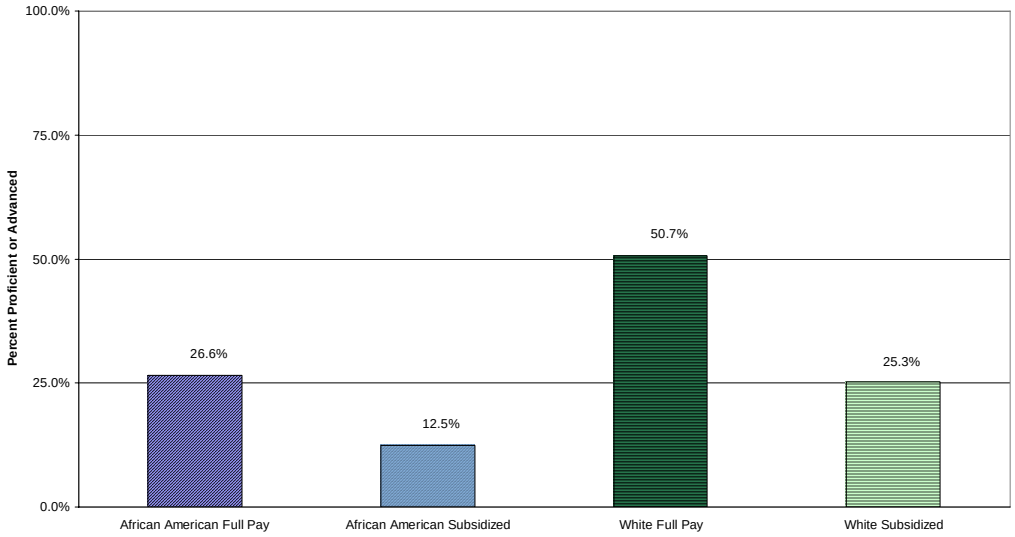


Figure 18: 2002 PACT Math - Percent Basic or Above

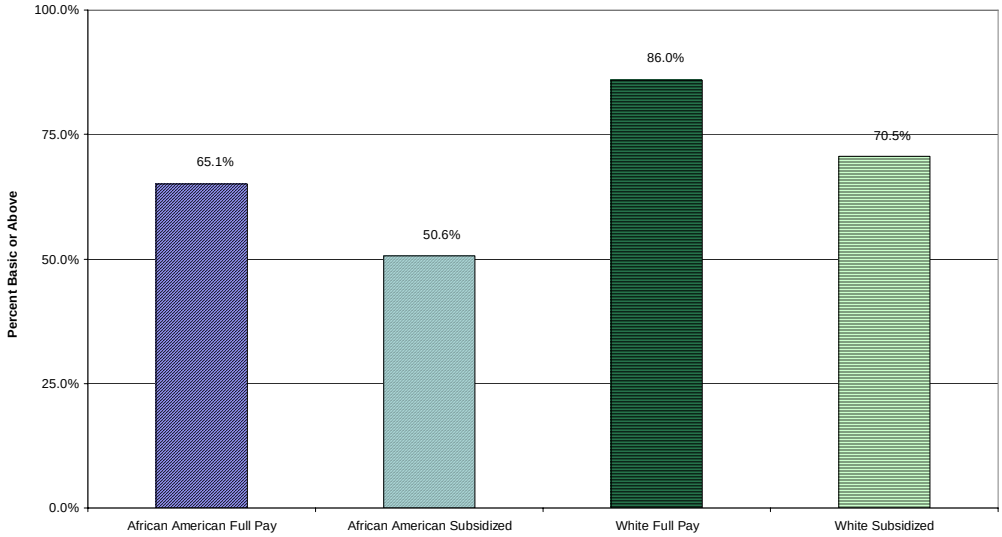


Figure 19: 2002 PACT Math - Percent Proficient or Advanced

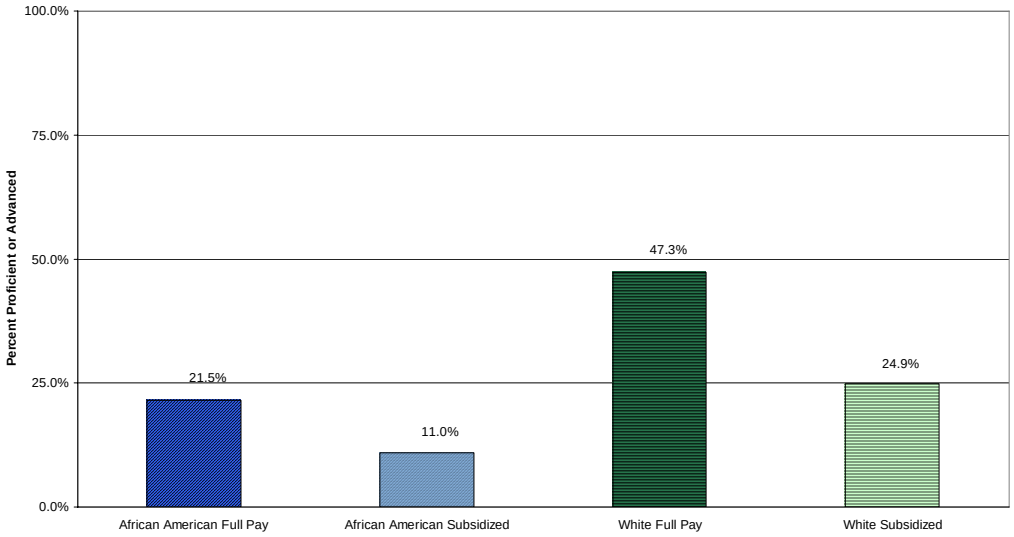


Figure 20: 2002 PACT English/Language Arts
Gap in Percent Basic or Above

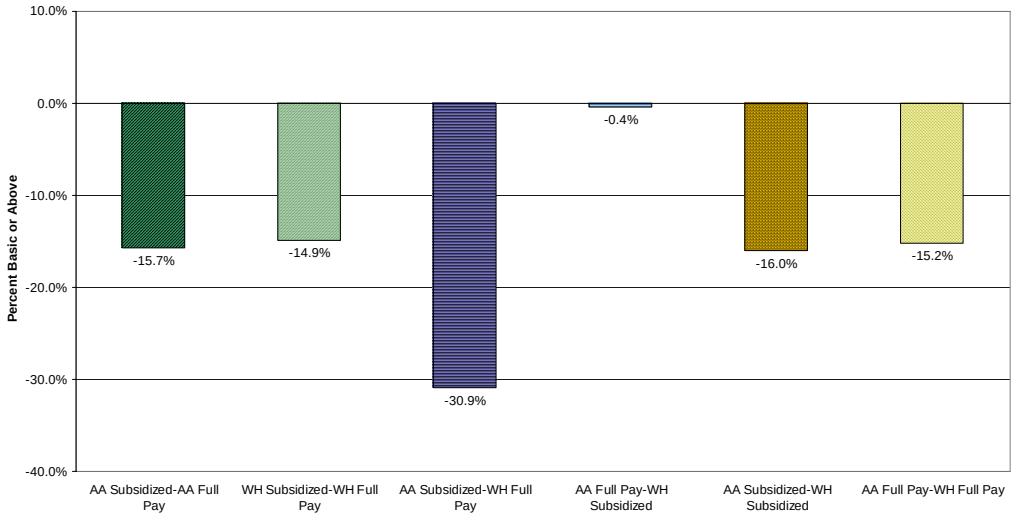


Figure 21: 2002 PACT English/Language Arts
Gap in Percent Proficient or Advanced

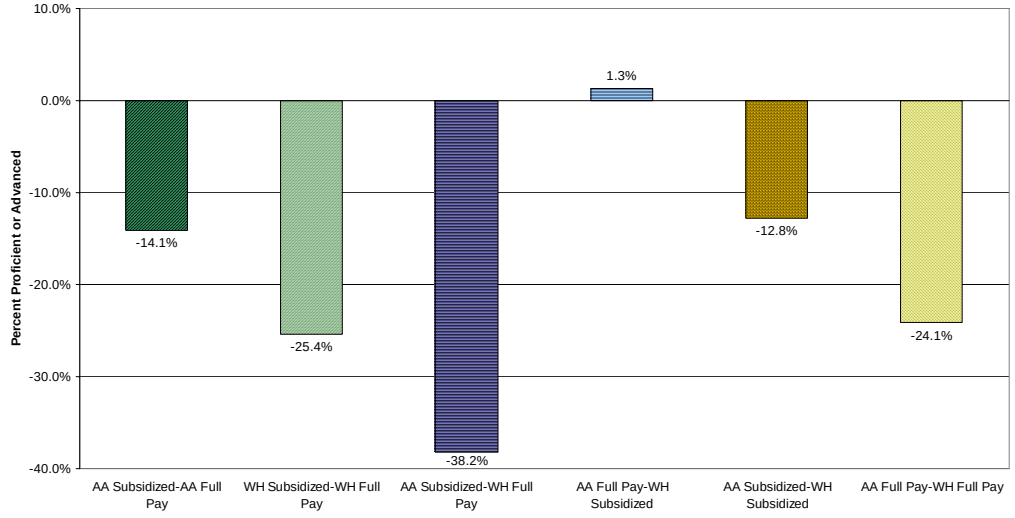


Figure 22: 2002 PACT Math
Gap in Percent Basic or Above

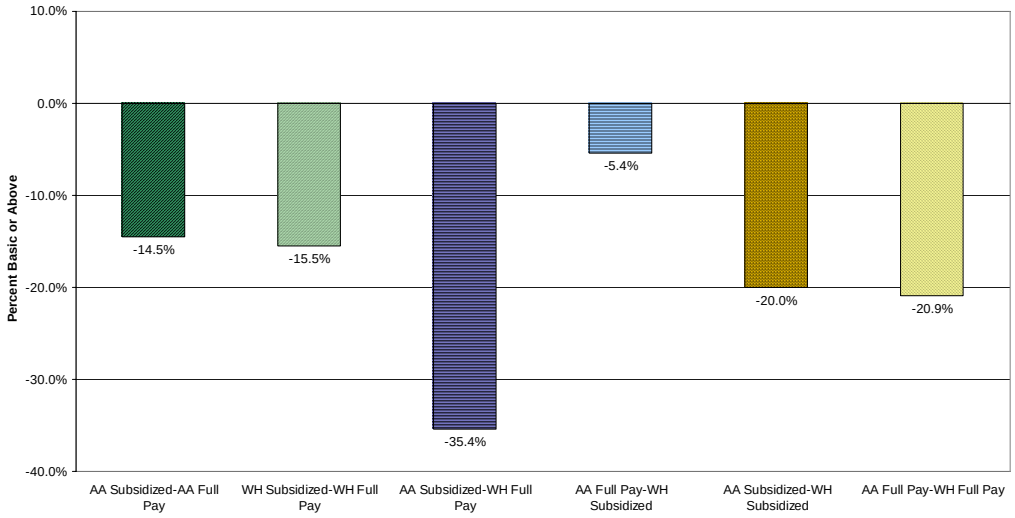


Figure 23: 2002 PACT - Math
Gap in Percent Proficient or Advanced

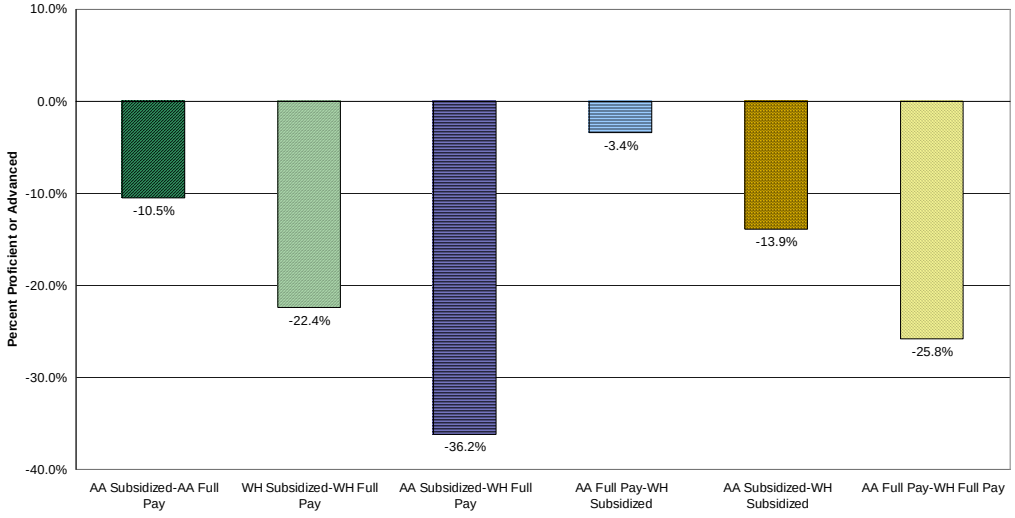


Figure 24: 2002 PACT English/Language Arts - Percent Basic or Above by Rating

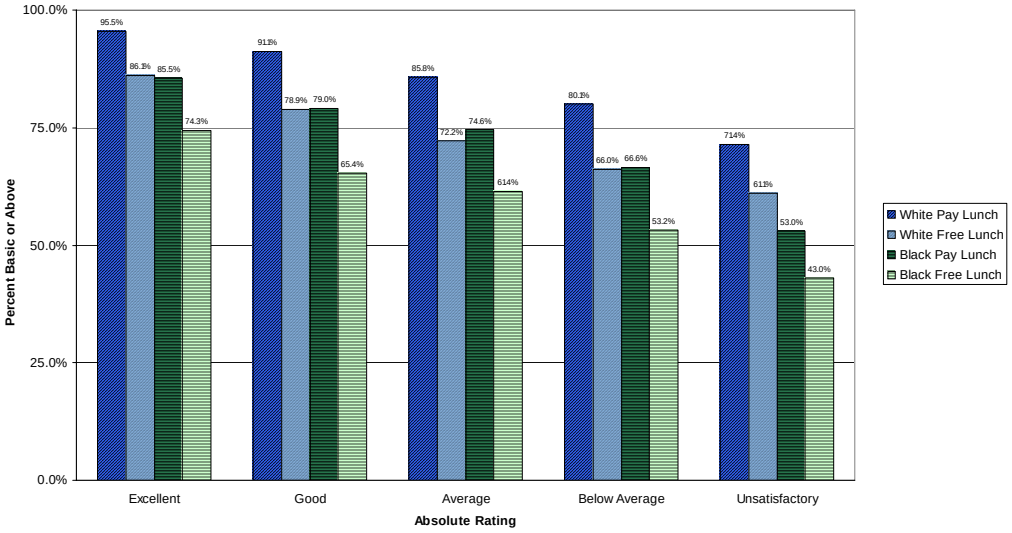


Figure 25: 2002 PACT English/Language Arts Percent Proficient or Advanced by Rating

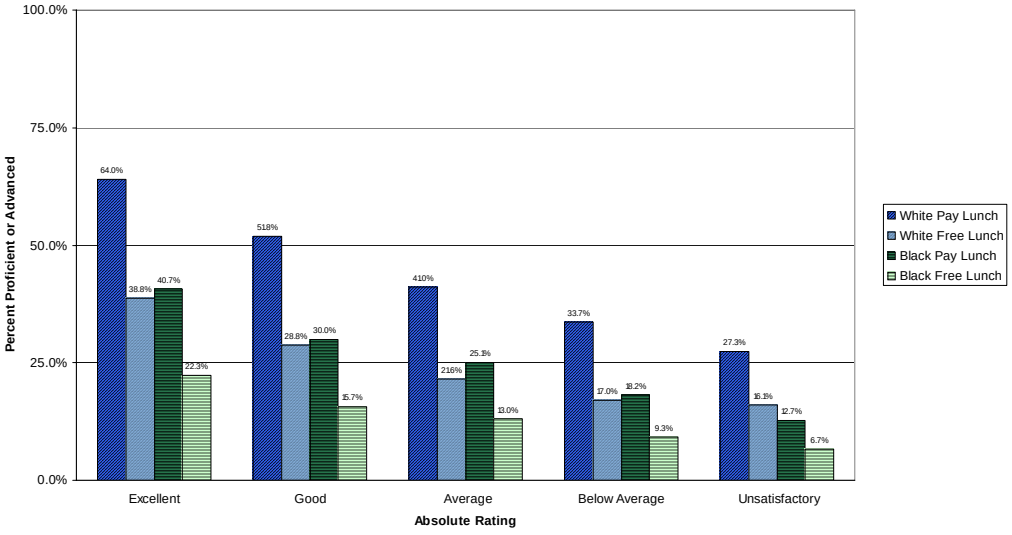


Figure 26: 2002 PACT Math - Percent Basic or Above by Rating

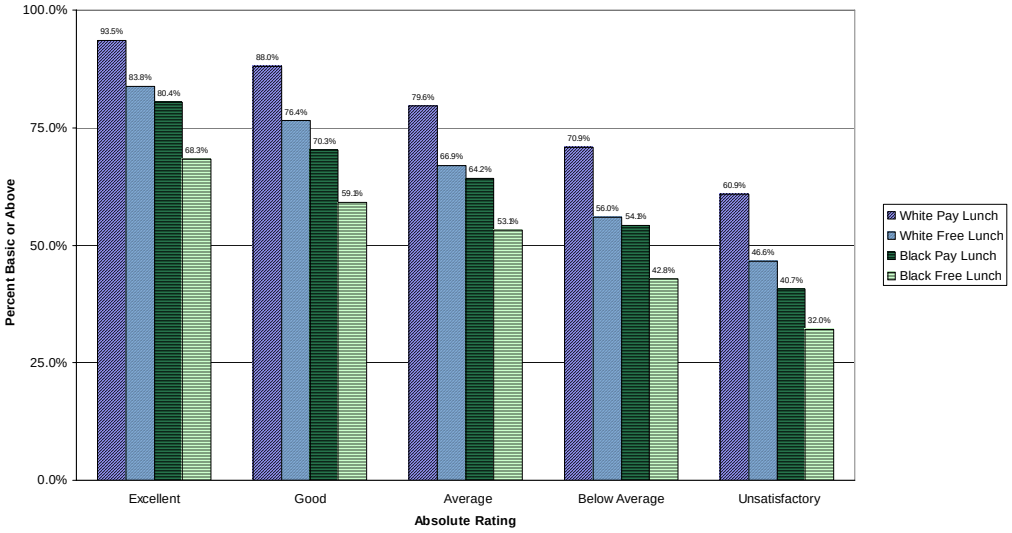
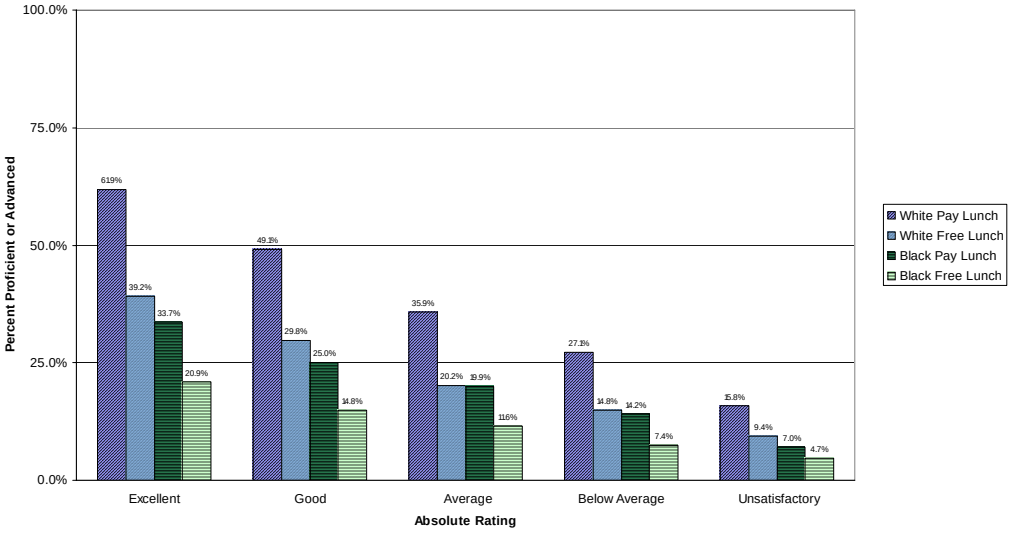
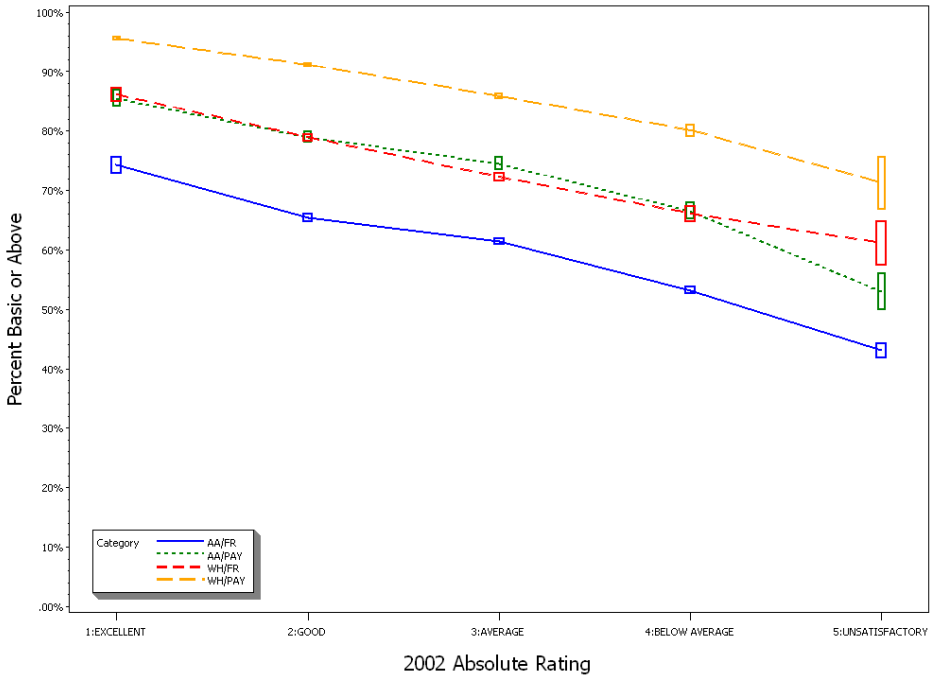


Figure 27: 2002 PACT Math - Percent Proficient or Advanced by Rating



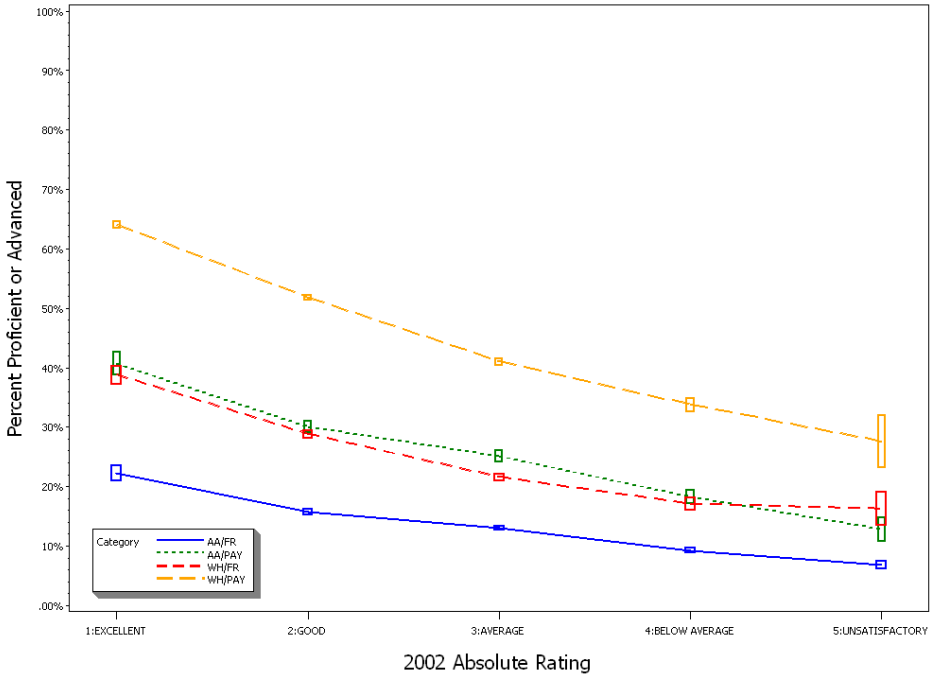
2002 PACT: English/Language Arts Percent Basic or Above

Figure 28



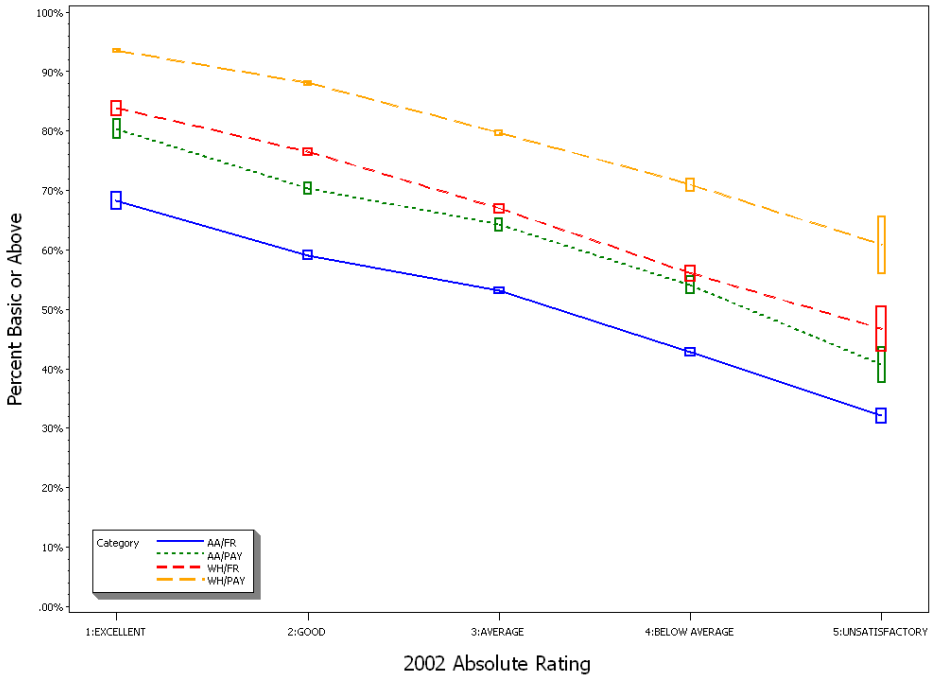
2002 PACT: English/Language Arts Percent Proficient or Advanced

Figure 29



2002 PACT: Math Percent Basic or Above

Figure 30



2002 PACT: Math Percent Proficient or Advanced

Figure 31